



Union Institute & University graduate Dana Johnson gets a hug from her 7-year-old daughter Madison at the Brattleboro graduation. Johnson earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Thematic Studies.

Union Institute & University Hands Out Diplomas

Monday April 26, 2010

BRATTLEBORO -- Union Institute and University at a ceremony Sunday graduated five students, and recognized four others who are scheduled to graduate this summer. The nine students received their degrees, Sunday, at the Brattleboro campus in the Vermont Agricultural and

Education Center on Old Guilford Road. Union Institute and University is a non-profit, private university that offers degree programs to adults.

The non-traditional school had its students accept their diplomas from parents, children and spouses, who came up to exchange tears and hugs as they recognized the newest college graduate in the family.

Rickey Gard Diamond, contributing editor and founding editor of Vermont Woman, and a professor at the college, gave the commencement speech.

Students come to Union Institute, Gard Diamond said, because they have questions, and they took the initiative to search for those answers away from traditional schools.

She encouraged the graduates to continue seeking out knowledge in non-traditional ways as they moved ahead with their lives.

"What matters to all of you is investigating. Go through that agony," she said. "Trust the process."

And just as their education took a non-traditional route, she warned the graduates that the majority of people they encounter will have made their way following traditional experiences.

"We give you permission to soar, and fall flat on your face," she said.

Before receiving their degrees, each of the graduates were recognized for the projects they completed.

Mary Daigle, who is a care giver on a dementia unit in a long-term facility, did a project on how different cultures around the world view dementia.

She also explored reasons why some cultures hesitate to seek outside help.

The members of the 2010 graduating class include Richard Abath, Mary Daigle, Kim Freeman, Margret Hansen, Beth Hiner, Dana Johnson, Jennifer Martyn, Patricia Normandeau and Julia Ricklis.

Howard Weiss-Tisman can be reached at hwTisman@reform-er.com or 802-254-2311, ext. 279.